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MTSS Component Focus of the Month

February

Component Number Two: Effective Collaboration

Welcome to the second component in a series of five documents that provide useful information for effectively implementing a multi-tiered system of supports in Vermont schools. The [*Vermont \(MTSS-RtII\) Field Guide \(2014\)*](#) contains five components that will be addressed. We began the sequence with the central component, A Systemic and Comprehensive Approach. Now we will focus on **Effective Collaboration**, which is a distinctive characteristic of effective schools and a necessary component for a successful multi-tiered system of supports.

Importance of Component

Effective Collaboration among administrators, teachers, and parents impact teaching and learning in several positive ways:

1. Students achieve at higher levels with better levels of skills and understanding;
2. Students' academic success increases based on performance data in relation to standards and classroom interaction;
3. A positive relationship between collaborative school culture and student achievement is reflected in the content areas, i.e. reading and math;
4. Improved school-wide coordinated efforts that address behavior can lead to reduced behavior problems and increased positive interactions between students and teachers;
5. Collaboration is a core component in academic and behavioral improvements in students; and
6. As teachers, parents, students and others interact as partners in education, a collaborative community develops (*Vermont (MTSS –RtII) Field Guide, 2014*).

Furthermore, essential components of Effective Collaboration include a framework that is based on trust among individuals who work together for a common purpose (*Vermont (MTSS –RtII) Field Guide, 2014*), which includes the following characteristics:

1. Focus on problem solving;
2. Mutual respect for each other's interests, talents, knowledge and skills;
3. Participation in open, honest, respectful conversations and inquiry about each other's ideas;

4. Use clear, agreed upon, well-defined norms that indicate desired behaviors and types of communication that produce a safe environment for shared experiences;
5. Identify roles and responsibilities associated with specific practices and decisions that create positive change;
6. Practice effective conflict resolution processes; and
7. Share responsibility for involvement, decisions, and actions that result in the outcomes (*Vermont (MTSS-RtII) Field Guide*, 2014).

Benefits of this Component

As stated in the first *MTSS Component Focus of the Month*, all students benefit from a multi-tiered system of supports with evidence-based practices that maximize student achievement through academic and behavior supports. Effective Collaboration, also includes Universal, Targeted, and Intensive levels of support by fostering an environment that produces collaborative cultures, where both educators and students learn (*Vermont (MTSS-RtII) Field Guide*, 2014).

Furthermore, educators in schools with effective collaboration share:

- A clear mission and vision;
- A focus on student learning, standards and objectives, and on results;
- An accepted collective responsibility that all students will learn;
- A belief in the value of communication and interaction with colleagues;
- A high expectation of success for everyone, including themselves; and
- A desire to engage in professional and purposeful collaborative activities (*Vermont (MTSS-RtII) Field Guide*, 2014).

Steps to Getting Started

Listed below are suggested steps to get started implementing effective collaboration in a multi-tiered system of supports.

- **Teams** – the use of [collaborative teams](#) comprised of teachers, administrators and support staff responsible for analyzing data (screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring data) and providing instruction at the Universal (Tier 1) or classroom level; Targeted (Tier 2) or small group level; and Intensive (Tier 3) or individual student levels.
- **Parent/Family** – developing [trusting family collaborative relationships](#) are crucial to developing effective collaboration.
- **Community** – effective collaboration between schools and communities is important for students' success, both academically and socially.

Vignettes and Resources

- SWIFT [Steps to Get You Started: Trusting Family Partnerships](#)
- [SWIFT in 60 Trusting Family Partnerships](#)
- SWIFT [TA Practice in 60 Transformation Teaming](#)
- The IRIS Center [Collaborative Learning Builds Deeper Understanding](#)
- Vermont Family-Community Resource Report